

JUL 21 1936

# SIERRA CLUB BULLETIN

VOLUME XXII



NUMBER 3

JUNE 1936

Published Bimonthly by the Sierra Club, San Francisco, Calif. Address all communications to the Secretary of the Sierra Club, 1050 Mills Tower, 220 Bush St., San Francisco, Calif. Annual dues are \$4.00 (first year, \$5.00), of which \$1.00 is for subscription to SIERRA CLUB BULLETIN. Entered as second-class matter at Post Office, San Francisco, under Act of March 3, 1879.

## Commonwealth Club Warns Against Further Road-Building Into California's High Mountains

**WE BELIEVE** that California's undeveloped high mountain areas have been reduced dangerously near to a minimum for the welfare of the State, and that no further intrusions by the building of roads should be allowed without convincing proof of public necessity.

This resolution, passed by the Section on Forestry and Wild Life of the Commonwealth Club in a fifty-seven to two vote, was overwhelmingly endorsed by a postal ballot of the entire club membership. 650 persons favored the resolution; 70 rejected it.

The Section Report, together with supporting and opposing arguments, was laid before the Commonwealth Club at a dinner meeting, April 16, 1936. The Section's findings, presented by Chairman L. A. Barrett, for many years Assistant United States Regional Forester, are given here in brief:

"A region once opened up by roads can never be closed," Mr. Barrett declared. "On the other hand, areas kept closed now can be opened by future generations if it becomes necessary to do so."

Out of a National Park and National Forest area of more than twenty million acres only 600,000 lie more than ten miles from

an existing road. Though the national parks and forests contain only one-fifth of the State's area and one-hundredth of its population, they contain one-fourth of the mileage; few of these roads have traffic sufficient to pay for their upkeep.

The setting aside of 1,932,072 acres as primitive area marks the first formal attempt to erect barriers against intensive road-building. But, out of nineteen such areas only four are extensive enough to be valuable from the packing standpoint. Even these are threatened by organized minorities who want to build roads either through them, or so close to their boundaries as to destroy their wilderness qualities. An example is the proposed Porterville-Lone Pine Highway, connecting two small towns through a half-million-acre wilderness. Secured through local political pressure, and not advocated by any of the road-building agencies in the State, this road would to all intents and purposes throw open the entire high country from Sequoia National Park south to South Fork Valley. Other proposed roads whose desirability was seriously questioned by the Section are:

1. Extension of a fire-control road into Haypress Meadows on the Marble Mountains.

2. Extension of the New River Road to the Salmon-Trinity summit.

3. East entrance to Lassen Volcanic Park, via Silver Lake and the Caribou Primitive Area.

4. The Sierra Way, through the edge of the Yosemite adjacent to Hetch-Hetchy Lake and Crane Flat.

5. Bass Lake to Mammoth, via Beasore Meadows, and the Devils Postpile.

6. An additional road from Big Meadows into Kings River Canyon at about Cedar Grove.

7. Sierra Way connection through part of Sequoia National Park from the Giant Forest to Lloyd Meadows.

In concluding his address, Mr. Barrett stated: "The ultimate pattern of the California Mountains, unless the present trend is checked, will be made up of roads, excessive development, poor hunting and fishing, and a large body of exploiters. Just a few more years of hesitation and the only trace of that wilderness which has exerted such a fundamental influence in moulding American character will be in the musty pages of pioneer books and the mumbling memories of tottering antiquarians."

Following Mr. Barrett's report, the opposition presented its case for building more roads into the high mountains. The speech, representing views of the State Chamber of Commerce, the State Automobile Association, and the Automobile Club of Southern California, is here summarized:

Roads have made the public conservation-minded, and conservation will receive support in just the degree that citizens are acquainted with the problems through the automobile and the improved highway. In

areas of timber and brush, roads are necessary for fighting forest fires; in the higher, more barren and scenic reaches a few roads are needed for recreational purposes, so that the general public may enjoy the most attractive portions of the High Sierra. Every one of the primitive areas should in some degree be made available to the motorist; highways should be built *to*, but not *through*, these areas. The Sierra Way would be a beneficial road, linking disconnected roads, acting as a barrier to road-building further to the east, and opening up the most attractive undeveloped mountain regions to recreation-seekers.

The final address on the scheduled program was given by Horace Van Arsdale Scott, for thirty years a Sierra camper and hiker. Mr. Scott contrasted the Sierra, as he had first known it, with the road-invaded Sierra of today. "Last year I rode over the completed section of the new Kings River road. What a scene of devastation met my view! Ruthless ruin in that canyon! Blasting had loosened huge masses of granite and the resultant debris, rolling down the precipitous side, carried everything before it. . . . What have modern roads done to the beauties of natural life? They, with their coatings of oil, have killed the grass and flowers, leaving dry, dust-laden stretches. Everywhere is dust and more dust. . . . Sequoia, my wonderland! When I first packed in, everything was green and beautiful right up to those grand old forest monarchs. Each year it became drier and drier until now the only green is in the meadows remote from the roads. The trees are fenced in to save their lives, jeopardized by carbon monoxide gases; also these trees must be protected from pedestrians, who tramp the earth down hard, preventing the penetration of necessary moisture."

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Following the formal addresses the meeting was thrown open to discussion from the floor.

Norman Livermore Jr., Sierra Club member, and Secretary-Treasurer of the High Sierra Packers Association, pointed out the impossibility of maintaining primitive areas, and at the same time making them more available to the motoring public. He defined a wilderness area as a "region sufficiently removed from auto roads so that people can, and do, 'pack in' at least one day's journey."

Hugh R. Pomeroy, City and County Planning Advisor, expressed the opinion that there were enough roads into the Sierra, and that any further road-building in that region should be under the supervision of some disinterested planning agency. "It seems to me," Mr. Pomeroy said, "that if six hundred thousand people can get into the Sierra regions on our highways, we have plenty of highways into those Sierra regions. There is a type of service to be rendered by the intensively used mountain areas accessible to the motorist, and you can get more of it into a given area. There is a service which must be preserved for those who seek the wilderness areas, and those who would go back to the primitive beginnings of the race and find some communion with Nature that is not possible under the tense conditions of modern urban life.

"The time is coming in California—it is now under way with the work of the State Planning Board and various county planning commissions—when there must be developed an adequate and comprehensive land utilization plan for the entire State that will assign the proper and desirable development to the various areas of the State, not in terms of promotion, or speculation, or local pride, but in terms of a well-balanced, comprehensive land-use plan for the State as a whole. Let

this meeting tonight endorse the report of the Section, with its concluding resolution, and establish at least one agency in the State which is prepared to set up the counter-interest of the people as a whole against the personal and local interest of those who would destroy something which was given to us by God Himself, and which, once destroyed, can never be replaced."

Francis P. Farquhar presented a statement of the Sierra Club's attitude. "The Sierra Club has never advocated the barring of automobiles from the mountains. . . . We do not say that all further building of roads should be prohibited; we merely ask that, as stated in the resolution passed by the Section, convincing proof of public necessity should first be made.

"As you read down the list, in the Section report, of proposed roads tapping wilderness areas, there is an increasing augury of danger and destruction, until we come to the Sierra Way, which, in its southern extremity, violates a wilderness far greater in value to the people of this State than would be a scenic highway on which you can travel so fast that you cannot see the scenery." In answer to the argument for the Sierra Way—that it would block further road-building to the east—Mr. Farquhar stated that experience had shown quite the contrary to be true. "As soon as a new road enters a region it offers irresistible opportunities for tapping still farther into the wilderness. Therefore, we ask and implore the people of this state to find some means of careful consideration and planning before they do something which they cannot undo."

In regard to a method for carrying out the policy expressed in the resolution, most of the speakers favored the creation of a planning agency. Chairman Barrett presented the

most concrete proposal: "As a solution to this whole problem, I suggest the creation of a non-political, impartial committee of five or seven outstanding men of the whole State who should pass upon all future road-building projects in the undeveloped high moun-

tain regions of California where roads are not necessary from the fire-suppression standpoint. No individual or organization should be represented on this committee who would have any financial or personal interest in the construction of the road."

## The 1936 Mount Waddington Expedition

Mount Waddington, the finest mountaineering objective in North America, still beckons to mountaineers to come and try to gain her summit, guarded by treacherous crevasses and ice-falls and a rock pinnacle covered with ice-feathers and snow-laden ledges. This year the assault is to be a joint one, the Sierra Club sending in six men and the British Columbia Mountaineering Club sending in seven with a newspaper photographer-writer. Three Sierra Club men who were with the 1935 Expedition will go again this year. They are Bestor Robinson, Dick Leonard and Jack Riegelhuth. The new men are Kenneth Adam, Raffi Bedayan and Hervey Voge. The expedition is to be under the joint leadership of the two clubs—the Sierra Club men taking the main responsibility on rock-climbing, and the British Columbia

Mountaineering Club on ice and snow. An advance party will go ten days before the climbing party, in order to pack in supplies and equipment and establish camp high up on the Dais Glacier, so that the climbing party will be kept fresh for the final attack. News flashes will be sent out by carrier pigeons.

It is believed that, by combining the highly specialized technique developed by each of the clubs in their respective fields of rock and ice, this year's expedition represents the strongest party that has been put in the field against Mount Waddington. Since the ascent of the mountain has already been attempted thirteen times without success by very expert parties, it is clear that the mountain presents extraordinary difficulties. R. M. L.

## First Winter Ascent of Mount Lyell

On March 2, 1936, five Sierra Club members made what is probably the first winter ascent of Mount Lyell. Almost the entire trip was made on skis. The party, comprising David R. Brower, Lewis F. Clark, Boynton S. Kaiser, Einar Nilsson, with Bestor Robinson as leader, left Yosemite Valley on Saturday morning. The first night was spent in the Merced Lake Ranger Cabin; the second, camped on the snow at two thousand feet above timber-line, south of Vogelsang Pass. Next day the party fought its way over the crest between Parsons Peak and Mount Macclure in the face of a high wind, and skied

up the Lyell Glacier as far as the bergschrund below the rocky cliffs of the north face. Here they abandoned their skis, roped up, crossed the bergschrund on a snow bridge, then tramped up a snowfield to the summit, which they reached at 2:00 P. M., just five hours after leaving High Camp. The return trip on skis was rapid, the Merced Lake Ranger Cabin being reached that evening, and Yosemite Valley on the day following. A more complete account of the winter conquest of Mount Lyell will appear in the next magazine number of the SIERRA CLUB BULLETIN.

## Road From Lone Pine to Hunters Flat\*

A road from Lone Pine in Owens Valley to Hunters Flat at the foot of Mount Whitney has recently been completed, and motorists will now be able to drive to an elevation of approximately 8,500 feet on the east side of the Sierra. From this point the summit of Whitney is only thirteen miles by trail. The new road is somewhat narrow—fourteen to seventeen feet—but is well graded. At its terminus, the boundary of the High Sierra Primitive Area, parking and picnicking facilities will be available, as well as the services of a pack station. A public camp is maintained during the summer months at Ibex Park (10,500 feet), about two hours' walk from the end of the road. Riding and pack-train trips start from Ibex Park or Hunters Flat. The ascent of Mount Whitney may be made from Ibex Park, by trail, on foot or on horseback, returning to Ibex Park or to the road's end the same day. The round trip from the road's end is usually considered too long for one day, even by experienced walkers.

For those who may feel concern at this new invasion of the Sierra, we quote from *The Inyo Register* of May 21st:

"The public may be assured that the Forest Service has a written administrative policy which provides that this road will never be extended beyond its present terminus, and this policy can only be violated with the full approval of the Chief of the Forest Service in Washington. The Creator of this sublime scenic area has seen to it in the process of creation that little violation of its primitive features would ever be accomplished by man by making it so difficult that it just isn't practical to extend the road beyond its present terminus, and public opinion would be so strongly opposed to such development that it is not believed that any Government officials, no matter how they were inclined personally, could ever violate this written policy which is now in effect."

\*It has been proposed that the name "Hunters Flat" be replaced by "Whitney Portal."

## High Sierra Packing Stations

With the approach of the vacation season many are interested in knowing the packing stations at the road's end, where they may obtain the services of packers, pack-stock, or burros for private trips. Starr's *Guide to the John Muir Trail and the High Sierra Region* shows the location of the approach roads in the introductory section, and on the map the roads and the terminal points are clearly delineated. In addition to this information, Norman Livermore Jr., noted for his researches concerning the services and problems of High Sierra packers, has furnished a com-

plete list of such packing stations. It is of interest that the oldest dates back to 1872; the newest has two seasons of service. Of the 71 outfits established, 49 are on the west side and 22 on the east side of the Sierra. Collectively they maintain 25,000 head of stock. The highest station is on the Mount Whitney trail, at 10,500 feet elevation, and the lowest is at Independence, at 3,580 feet.

Starting on the east side, from Tioga Pass on the north and ranging down to Walker Pass on the south, thence north on the west

side, packing stations are located at the following places:

Silver Lake, June Lake, Mammoth, Lake Mary, Bishop, Rock Creek Lakes, Pine Creek (near Round Valley), McGee Creek, Bishop Creek, Big Pine Creek, Independence, Onion Valley, Symmes Creek, Oak Creek, Taboose Creek, Davis Creek, Lone Pine, Olancha, Little Lake, Kernville, Posey, Pine Flat, Springville, Mineral King, Three Rivers, Giant Forest, Big Meadows, General Grant National Park, Hume, Coolidge, Crown Val-

ley, Dinky Creek, Huntington Lake, Mono Hot Springs, Lakeshore (Huntington Lake), Hogue Ranch (North Fork), Jackass Meadows, Bass Lake, Koontz Meadows, Jerseydale, Fish Camp, Mariposa, Yosemite Valley, Wawona, Mather, Tuolumne Meadows.

It is not practical to list here the names of the respective packers at such points, but that information is obtainable from the superintendents of the National Parks or the supervisors of the National Forests in which these "jumping-off places" are situated.

## The North American Wild Life Conference

Probably nothing has happened in recent years to stimulate the conservation movement more than the Wild Life Conference held in Washington, D. C., early this spring. The popular interest aroused and the results produced were heartening to all interested in wild life conservation, coming as they did shortly after the appearance of articles by Jay N. Darling and others of national reputation in popular eastern periodicals, which admitted the desperate situation faced by the nation in regard to its vanishing wild life. There was a great outpouring of constructive ideas developed at the Conference and a great national interest therein was reflected by the public press. Special interest was shown through the reaction of sportsmen's groups, which, in particular, were keenly alert to the urgency of taking intelligent and concerted action toward this conservation move.

In his splendid address to the Conference, Jay N. Darling drew attention to the fact that our own and the neighboring governments of Canada and Mexico had joined in the movement, fully recognizing the necessity of prompt action.

"Will the constituents of these governments accept the opportunity which is here offered to organize for co-ordinated and constructive action? Or will the interests of Wild Life Conservation continue as in the past to remain a spiritual presence without material force? Out of this meeting must come a definition of our common aims, free from the controversial differences inherent in group interests. A program comprehensive in scope must be devised on which our combined strength may unite. Ways and means of putting that program into effect must be considered and our international, regional and state delegations committed to carry the proposals back to the communities which they represent, for their consideration and adoption. In my judgment such a combination of fundamental principles is entirely practical and physically attainable."

Explaining the fundamental economic factors which bear upon the relation of wild life resources to our material prosperity, Mr. Darling continued:

"Wealth will continue to exist on this continent only so long as the natural resources of our soil and water continue to yield up



their riches. When these are gone, prosperity, standards of living and happiness among our people will vanish with them."

He stated that:

"A great gap has existed somewhere in our continental mechanism for wild life conservation, through which has leaked a constant and increasing loss, which has drained many of our species to the vanishing point and left an inadequate population of all the rest. If wild life is an economic and social benefit, our first objective must be restoration. We have awakened too late to the needs of so-called conservation.

"As I see it there is no irreconcilable conflict between wild life conservation and any branch of industrial interests. No one could successfully defend any project for wild life conservation which would supplant a more beneficial use of land or water. The trouble in the past has been that the value of wild life resources to the community and the continent as a whole has never even remotely entered into the economic bookkeeping of our national and industrial planning. Few are aware of the incalculable cash losses which have resulted to the people of this continent through this persistent oversight."

In emphasis of this fact he reminded his audience that during late years, in a time of great economic distress, it was suddenly discovered that: "The people of this continent could no longer fall back on those reserve resources of nature in our lakes, streams and wooded hills which had served to sustain us with profitable employment, food and the necessities of life in time of need since the white man invaded this continent. Our polluted rivers and depleted lakes, once magnificent reservoirs of sustaining resources for international trade and continental consumption, no longer yielded their vast bounty to

stay the hunger of our people; the drained marshes and depleted forest lands had ceased to harbour the fur-bearing animals, once a major export commodity and fountain of riches. From the vast plains and wilderness areas of public domain came sickening cries for help where once nature had maintained a magnificent larder for man when other devices of urban civilization failed.

"Nature's rich storehouse had been gutted. Man could no longer turn to it for the necessities of life when his self-generated hysteria threw the ingenious substitutes of money, banks and industry out of gear. Nature's cushion was no longer there to break the fall when our artificial structure crashed. If nature's pantry had been wisely guarded the relief rolls would have been a fraction of their present astonishing magnitude."

Space does not permit of quoting his entire speech; however, he proceeded to furnish practical examples of the gutting of natural resources, and stressed the fact that industrial development could have continued unhindered and wild life could have been protected at the same time had intelligent thought been given to proper planning.

As an example of the lack of planning, he mentioned the fact that 400 million acres of land in the Federal domain and National Forests are administered by the United States Government without any authorized jurisdiction over the wild life resources, and what is done in that direction is voluntary; also the fact that the individual conscience of the administering officers is the only safeguard, and that is too often inadequate. Even the Congressional Wild Life Committee, he said, is without jurisdiction, and its services, too, are entirely voluntary.

As to the states themselves, eighty per cent have planning commissions working un-

der the National Resources Planning Board, but as a rule they lack technical wild life advisers and are not properly informed on the biological consequences of their proposed projects. And under such chaotic supervision millions of dollars are spent annually.

Mr. Darling then stressed the need of a national program of restoration and conservation which shall be adopted as a policy of our national government—its responsibilities to be defined and the demarcation between Federal and State responsibility determined.

Then, in answer to the obvious question, "What can we do about it?" he first stressed the need of pulling together to accomplish the desired objective. Then he stated that, rather than blame our government officials for failing to protect something concerning which we had never voiced our convictions, we should first determine those convictions and then present them, backed by impressive numbers. He reminded his audience that there were about 36,000 conservation organizations whose chief objective is wild life conservation, and 78,000 separate organizations in the Federated Women's Clubs; also 25,000 Garden Clubs greatly interested in wild life conservation. Besides these, there were an estimated seven and a half million

individuals who by annual purchase of license fees indicate their interest in wild life. These groups and their component individuals are obviously helpless and ineffectively unorganized. The problem, therefore, resolved itself into one of a federation of these group interests, to plan their program and then bring to bear their voting strength upon the men who are willing to serve when the demand is made impressive by the numbers interested therein.

As a result such a federation was organized. The name given to it is the General Wild Life Federation. It is incorporated as a non-profit membership corporation under the laws of the District of Columbia. The Federation is to be composed of one representative from each of the several states, territories, and District of Columbia. Each state representative must be selected by a state federation of interests whose principal purpose is the conservation of wild life. Nationwide organizations as approved by the Federation's board of directors will be entitled to one representative. A pamphlet has been issued, entitled "A Suggested Plan and Information for Use in the Formation of County and State Wild Life Federations," signed by J. N. Darling, acting president, and stating the objects of the Federation. All interested may obtain a copy by writing to the General Wild Life Federation, Washington, D. C.

## Miscellaneous

*Telegram to William E. Colby:* So pleased with high honor you have conferred upon me in election to honorary life membership of the Sierra Club. Kindly express my grateful appreciation to the Board of Directors.—LINCOLN ELLSWORTH.

*The Mountain Records Committee is ac-*

cumulating a library of photographs that will be of value to climbers, as a close-up study of the higher mountain peaks and their climbing routes. Members who care to contribute such material will kindly send it to the Committee, care of the Sierra Club, 1050 Mills Tower, San Francisco.



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